

THE HONORABLE JOHN C. COUGHENOUR

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
AT SEATTLE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

v.

CHARLES CROTEAU,

Defendant.

CASE NO. CR19-0232-JCC

ORDER

This matter comes before the Court on Defendant's unopposed motion to proceed with a plea hearing by video or teleconference (Dkt. No. 91). Having thoroughly considered the motion and the relevant record, the Court hereby GRANTS the motion for the reasons explained herein.

On November 20, 2019, Defendant pled not guilty to charges of conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine and possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute. (Dkt. Nos. 1, 24.) Defendant now moves for a change of plea hearing. (Dkt. No. 91.) According to Defendant, charges based on the same conduct are pending in Whatcom County, which Defendant expects will be dismissed upon his change of plea in this Court. (*Id.* at 5.) Therefore, Defendant wishes to move forward with a plea hearing now and consents to do so by video or teleconference in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this Court's in-person operations. (*Id.*)

Because of the health risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Court may conduct a felony plea hearing by video or teleconference if the defendant consents and the Court finds that

1 the plea hearing cannot be further delayed without serious harm to the interests of justice. *See*
2 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Pub. L. No. 116-136,
3 §§ 15002(b)(2)(A), (b)(4), 134 Stat. 281, 528–29 (2020); W.D. Wash. General Order No. 14-20
4 (Sept. 24, 2020), 04-20 (Mar. 30, 2020). Defendant has a strong interest in the speedy resolution
5 of this matter and has consented to a change of plea hearing by video or teleconference. (Dkt.
6 No. 91 at 5.) The Court will not resume in-person proceedings until at least January 1, 2021. *See*
7 W.D. Wash. General Order No. 15-20 at 2 (Oct. 2, 2020). Unnecessarily delaying Defendant’s
8 guilty plea hearing further would cause serious harm to the interests of justice.

9 For the foregoing reasons, the Court GRANTS Defendant’s unopposed motion to proceed
10 with a plea hearing by teleconference (Dkt. No. 91). The Court ORDERS that Defendant’s guilty
11 plea hearing be set as soon as practicable before a Magistrate Judge and be conducted by video
12 conference.

13 DATED this 6th day of November 2020.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John C. Coughenour", is written over a horizontal line.

John C. Coughenour
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE